

CAN A NATION BE A GENTLEMAN?

By ROBERT STEIN

*Address Delivered Before the Third National Peace
Congress, at Baltimore, May 4, 1911*

(Revised)

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Mr. Carnegie and Colonel Roosevelt disagree on a number of points, but they agree on one point: that assured peace is not possible without an international police, consisting of the combined armies and navies of the strongest, most enlightened and humane nations, best prepared by identity of ideals to trust each other, and least likely to abuse the police power.

If Britain, France, Germany, and the United States would enter into an agreement for mutual benefit, the international police would exist *ipso facto*.

Britain, France, and Germany cannot come to an agreement without mutual concessions.

The best way to advocate the policy of mutual concessions is by example.

* * *

That is my story in a nutshell, and I might just as well sit down and let these maps speak for themselves. However, I assume that you would like to hear a few details. WITH 2 MAPS

The wisest man in England, Sir Harry H. Johnston, in an article entitled "German Views of an Anglo-German Understanding," in the Nineteenth Century for December, 1910, shows that an Anglo-German agreement on the basis of mu-

tual concessions is practicable and imminent. A straw thrown in the balance may tip it in the right direction.

The United States can throw that straw. Our nation is universally regarded as the natural leader in the peace movement. If we deem it our duty to accept that leadership, we can not shirk the duty of setting the example in that policy of mutual concessions which is the only avenue to permanent peace. Now we have at this moment a unique, incomparable, God-sent opportunity to show to other nations how a concession is made. To our neighbor, Canada, whose friendship we are just now so anxious to cultivate, we can make a concession which may just suffice, through the force of example, to supply the slight additional impulse needed to decide Britain and Germany to make the two vital mutual concessions pointed out by the wisest man in England. An Anglo-German agreement would inevitably be followed by a Franco-German agreement, also on the basis of mutual concessions, and then the international police would be complete, for everybody knows that the United States would instantly join it. Our duty to set this example is all the more manifest and imperative because the proposed concession to Canada involves no sacrifice; it is simply a question of putting an end to an absurdity.

* * *

You have before you the map of Alaska. You see that Alaska consists of two parts: the main body and the Panhandle, this strip of coast running southeastward to the parallel of $54^{\circ} 40'$, a mere ribbon, 536 miles long, 8 to 35 miles wide, shutting off the northern half of British Columbia and the entire Yukon Territory from free access to the Pacific. How large, do you think, is this Canadian territory thus deprived of its natural seaboard? It measures some 600,000 square miles, three times as much as Germany, more than ten times as much as England and Wales together. It has the same climate as Europe in the same latitude. In

Europe, north of the parallel $54^{\circ} 40'$, you find a slice of Ireland, a slice of England, all Scotland, all Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, all Finland, a slice of Germany, and the richest part of Russia; great cities like St Petersburg, with 1,700,000 inhabitants; Glasgow, with 900,000; Copenhagen, with 500,000. An equal area in Europe in the same latitude contains 25 million inhabitants.

This Canadian country has immense resources in timber, agricultural and mineral lands. The wealth of all countries is mainly concentrated in their ports—Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore—but it is derived from the commerce of the country behind them. The wealth of this Canadian country will necessarily be concentrated in its ports—on American territory. This entire slope is drenched with rain and possesses tremendous water power. The factories to be driven by that power will necessarily be on tide water—in American territory; but the reservoirs furnishing that power will be on Canadian ground. The 25 million Canadians who will eventually live behind this Panhandle will constantly be forced to contribute to the enrichment of half a dozen American cities, while these cities will not contribute a cent toward Canadian taxes. What a permanent and ever-growing source of irritation!

The only gentlemanly course, the only manly course open to us is to say to the Canadians: "We are willing to let you have this coast strip; what will you give us for it?" And if I had time I could show you that in exchange for it we could very likely get something far more useful to us than this absurd Panhandle, while the Panhandle itself, in Canadian hands, would be more useful to us than it now is.

Reverse the situation and see how we should like it. Imagine that our northeastern States were cut off from the Atlantic by a similar Panhandle, a Canadian sidewalk running from eastern Maine down nearly to Philadelphia; that all the great cities on that seaboard, Boston, Providence, Newport, New York, Jersey City, were Canadian cities, deriving

their wealth from the American country behind them, yet contributing not a cent toward American taxes; that not a pound of freight could be sent from Pittsburg or Buffalo to New York or Boston for export, except in bond! We should long ago have found the situation unendurable.

We should in that case have been greatly vexed if the Canadians had waited in stolid silence till the situation did become unendurable for us, till we were forced to complain. Now you remember what the Model Gentleman said nearly 1900 years ago: "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you." Shall we wait till the situation becomes unendurable to the Canadians? Shall we force them to complain?

If we make the offer of exchange now, of our own free choice, its beneficent effects will be at a maximum. The heart of Canada will be linked to us as with hooks of steel; a noble, generous national deed, more glorious than all our victories, will be inscribed in our annals; our example will be most effective in commanding the policy of mutual concessions to our parent nations. If we delay the concession till the Canadians complain, the memory of the concession will forever be soured by the reflection that we forced them to complain; the effect of our example will be almost nullified.

* * *

Suppose that the owner of this Panhandle were an individual. If he made the offer of exchange of his own free choice, we should call him a gentleman; if he waited till his neighbor complained, we should call him a boor, curmudgeon, plebeian, philistine, or some other cacophonous name. The question then arises: Can a nation be a gentleman?

In a letter from the late Prof. Thomas Davidson I found this startling sentence: "Nations are never gentlemen." You may have come across the same statement. One writer even attempts to prove that it is a sociologic law. A nation can not be a gentleman, he says. An individual can afford to

be generous, to forego certain rights for the benefit of others; a statesman cannot do this because the rights which he safeguards are not his own but those of his fellow-citizens.

What shall we say to this argument? First of all it is not absolutely true that nations are never gentlemen. The surrender of the Ionian Islands by Britain to Greece was a gentlemanly act. The United States, in returning the Chinese indemnity, proved itself a gentlemanly nation. In this case our statesmen did not wait till the Chinese craved our leniency; they did not even wait for an expression of public opinion in the United States. They assumed that the majority of our citizens were gentlemen; that the foremost right of our citizens, which the statesmen are called upon to safeguard, is the right to be gentlemen not only individually but collectively. The universal and enthusiastic applause with which their act was greeted proved that they were not mistaken.

It must be admitted, however, that national deeds like the two just cited are as rare as comets in the starry heavens. It would take a historian a week to find half a dozen national deeds that could be called gentlemanly.

The reason is very simple. Most men are willing enough to be complete gentlemen in their individual conduct, but when it comes to collective conduct, they split: the positive gentlemen breaks away from the negative gentleman. For to be a positive gentleman as a member of a political body means to persuade others to adopt a certain line of action, and this means nearly always a fight. Now a gentleman, by his very essence, dislikes a fight, because to fight means to do unto somebody something which that somebody does not like to be done unto him. That fraction of the nation which is not gentlemanly always speaks promptly and loud; the gentlemen mostly remain silent. The statesman hears only the hundred voices of noisy protest; he does not hear the silent approval of the pacific millions. That is the reason why nations are so rarely gentlemen.

Knowing the mosquito that inoculates nations with the malaria of ungentlemanliness, to wit, the over-pacific nature of the gentleman, it is comparatively easy to apply a remedy. If the gentlemen of a nation dislike to fight and yet recognize that they must fight in order that the nation may be gentlemanly, the natural thing to do is to look for some means to reduce the fighting to a minimum. Organization is that means. In union is strength. An army opposed to a mob has very little fighting to do.

* * *

Organization, federation—that is the leading aim of the Washington Peace Society. I confess that in organizing the society my original object was to gain its support for the proposed concession to Canada. It soon appeared, however, that some of the most influential men in Washington, while heartily in favor of that concession, did not think it wise to commit the society to any specific measures. The discussions at our meetings, however, brought out an idea of much wider scope, which will accomplish not only this but many other objects. It is the same idea that was so vigorously set forth by Mr. John A. Stewart in the Editorial Review for April: that the foremost need of the peace movement is the unification of all the immense forces available for peace work. Besides the peace societies, there are the thousands of churches, the Epworth League, the Christian Endeavor Society, the Chautauqua Societies, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Federation of Women's Clubs, the American Federation of Labor, all working for peace. At present their work is scattered, desultory, like that of a mob. Organize them into an army, under a general and a general staff, and you multiply their force tenfold. And when this is done, the proposed concession to Canada will come as a matter of course. When all the ladies and gentlemen of the land are federated, it will be easy to take a straw vote, an anticipated referendum, on any question relating to the gentlemanly

conduct of the nation. Then we shall no longer have to rely on those inspired prophets who know precisely what the American people are willing or not willing to do. At least 90 per cent of the people whom I did consult—and I consulted perhaps a hundred—gave ready assent to the proposed concession to Canada, and I have no doubt that the same proportion would hold throughout the nation. In other words, our nation is a gentleman, if we will only take the trouble to find it out.

It was a pleasure to learn that a committee for the unification of peace work is already in existence, having been appointed by the Lake Mohonk Conference through the influence of Mr. Smiley. When finally President Taft and Mr. Carnegie, at the very opening of this Congress, came out strongly in favor of federation, it could no longer be doubted that its success was assured.*

* * *

Three more suggestions and I am done.

We call ourselves a Christian nation. As such we profess

*The movement toward federation came to a successful issue in the following resolution, adopted by the Baltimore Peace Congress, May 6, 1911:

WHEREAS, There has been a manifest need for a central representative body which shall serve to co-ordinate the efforts of all the societies in America devoted to the settlement of international disputes by methods other than war, as emphasized by the President of the United States at the opening of this Congress; therefore be it

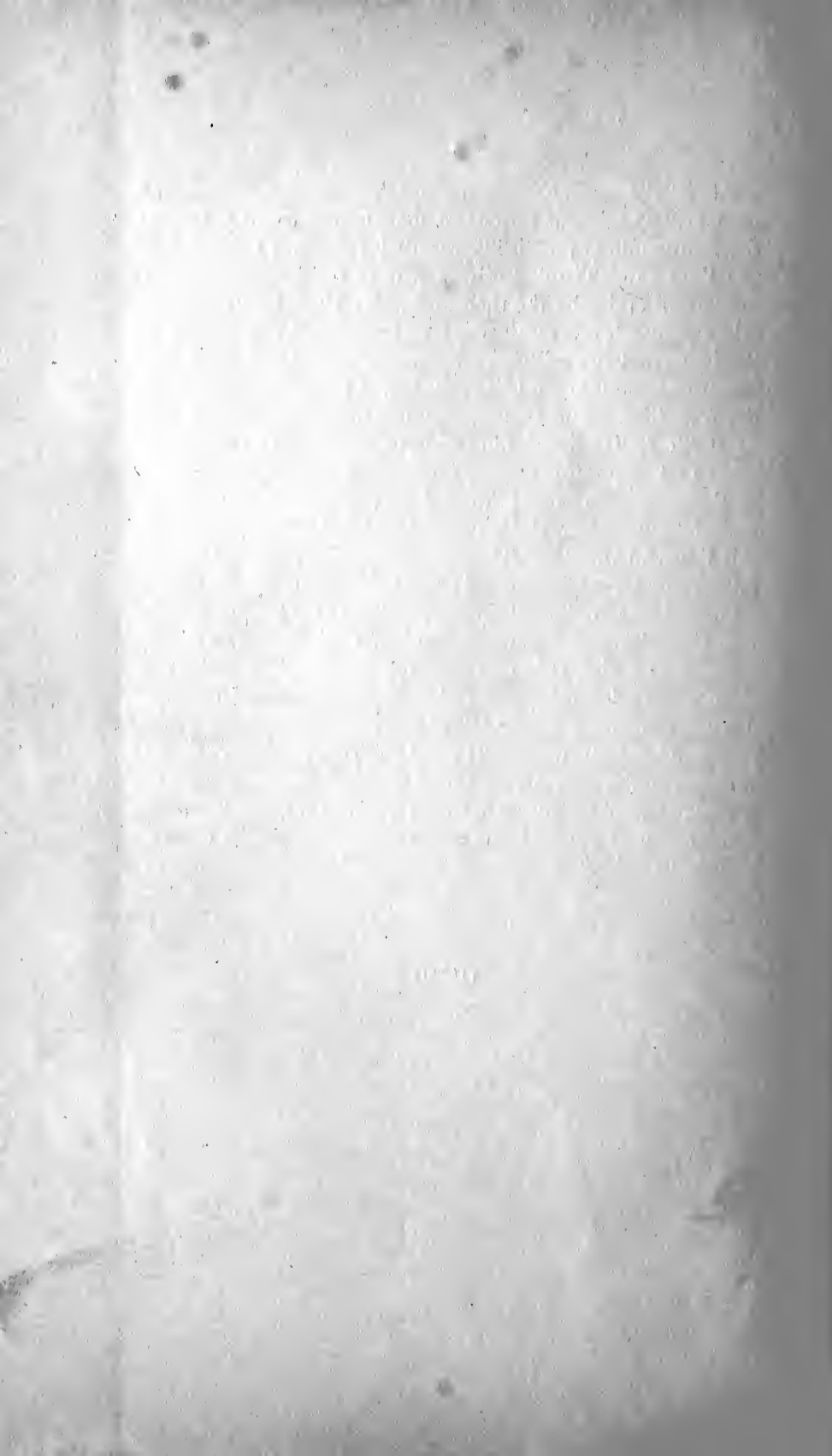
Resolved, That this body of delegates declare that this National Peace Congress shall hereafter be known as the American Peace Congress; that it shall be a permanent institution, which shall meet once in two years; and that, while the Congress is not in session, its Executive Committee shall be charged with all the powers of the Congress: *Provided*, That said Executive Committee shall have power to reorganize by enlarging its numbers so as to become representative, and after its reorganization shall elect its own chairman. And be it further

Resolved, That said Committee shall adopt a form of organization which shall enable it to act as a clearing-house for all the societies represented at this Congress.

to be guided by the rule which, by the express declaration of its Founder, constitutes the essence of Christianity: "Do unto others as you wish that they should do unto you." Suppose once more that a Canadian Panhandle did shut off our north-eastern States from access to the Atlantic, what would we wish the Canadians to do unto us? If we refuse to do likewise unto the Canadians, we may baptize our babies in oceans of water, we may build churches as high as the Eiffel Tower, but we are not a Christian nation. Let us find out whether we are.

In urging that we set the example in the policy of mutual concessions, I only referred to the effect it would have on Britain and Germany. In reality the effect would be far wider. Whoever has the slightest acquaintance with international politics knows that the jealousy and distrust which keep nations armed are due for the most part to unsettled questions, unnatural boundaries, like this Alaska boundary. If European nations are to arrive at that state of mutual confidence and cordiality which will enable them to dispense with armaments, they will first have to make a number of mutual concessions on these questions. We can not tell them what these concessions should be, without running the risk of being called meddlers; but we can urge them by the most persuasive of all methods, that of example. Concessions would quickly become the fashion, for no nation would care to be called ungentlemanly. If we refuse to set this example, and yet continue to preach peace, we must not be astonished to hear the reply: "You Americans are all the time talking about peace and international goodwill, but when it comes to removing the causes of international illwill, you are just as regardless of your neighbors' feelings, just as stubborn as any of us in maintaining a geographic absurdity, a geographic atrocity, a thorn in your neighbors' flesh, simply because it is so nominated in the bond. Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"

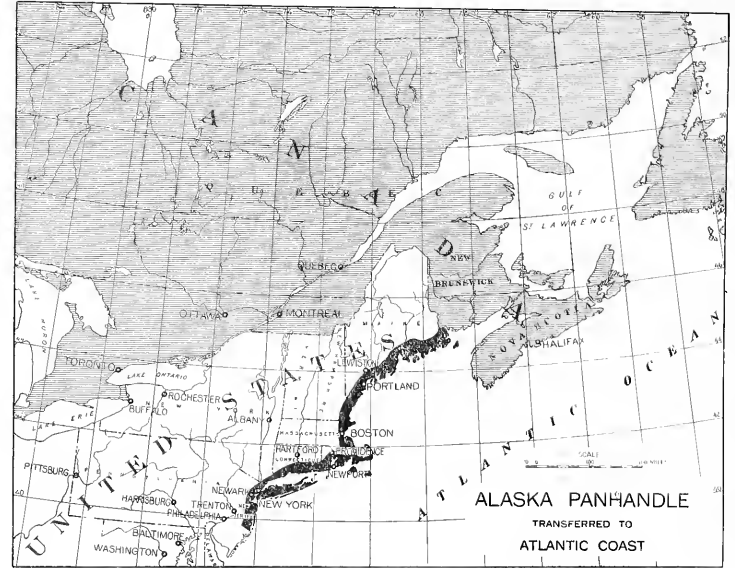
At present the Canadians are not complaining, because the inconvenience is not serious so long as the country behind the Panhandle is practically uninhabited. But in a year or two the Grand Trunk Railway will be finished, and immigrants will arrive by the thousands. By 1914, when we shall celebrate the 100th anniversary of peace with Great Britain, the inconvenience will have become acute. If we leave this unnatural boundary unchanged, it will hang like a pall over the festivities. The grotesque figure of the Panhandle will sit at the festive board like Banquo's ghost. If we wish to make that celebration a conspicuous landmark in the progress of the peace movement, what better means could we find than to relieve our Canadian neighbors of this nightmare, this thorn in the flesh, this standing discourtesy! What are fair words when the deed is lacking? A body without a soul, a corpse in fine shrouds and flowers. Let us breathe into it an immortal soul, the soul of an immortal national deed. If we wish to have a real, joyous feast of good-fellowship in 1914, let us be good fellows. All Canada would come down to get acquainted with the nation that was courteous to her not only in words but in deed. Our parent nations of Europe would gaze across the Atlantic in admiration and envy, and would soon begin to say to one another: "See how gentlemanly the Americans are to the Canadians! Let us go and do likewise."





How the Alaska Panhandle Would Look on Our Atlantic Coast.

"Imagine that our northeastern States were cut off from the Atlantic by a similar Panhandle, a Canadian sidewalk running from eastern Maine down nearly to Philadelphia; that all the great cities on that seaboard—Boston, Providence, Newport, New York, Jersey City—were Canadian cities, deriving their wealth from the commerce of the American country behind them, yet contributing not a cent toward American taxes; that not a pound of freight could be sent from Pittsburg or Buffalo to New York or Boston for export, except in bond!"



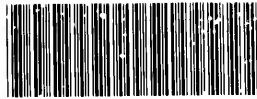
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"The only gentlemanly course open to us is to say to the Canadians: We are willing to let you have this coast strip; what will you give us for it?"

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